

# **7 FAM 230 OFFICIAL REPORT OF DEATH OF A U.S. CITIZEN ABROAD**

## **7 FAM 231 THE REPORT OF DEATH**

### **7 FAM 231.1 Purpose and Use**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. Optional Form 180 (OF-180), Report of the Death of an American Citizen Abroad (ROD) is the official notice of the death of a U.S. citizen abroad, as distinguished from the initial notification by telephone and telegram [see *Subchapter 7 FAM 220* ]. It is an *administrative report* which provides essential facts concerning the death of a U.S. citizen abroad and custody of the personal estate of the deceased and must be completed for all deaths of non-military U.S. citizens abroad.

*NOTE: Form OF-180 supersedes Form FS-192. Consular officers may still be presented with a form FS-192 to verify death or citizenship of a decedent, and should accept such forms unless there is reason to question their validity.*

b. Form OF-180 often is used in settlement of legal and estate matters. It is important that the form be completed as accurately as possible. Direct inquiries about the issuance or preparation of the Report of Death (ROD) to the Department (CA/OCS).

### **7 FAM 231.2 Timely Issuance**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. *Often the NOK cannot settle urgent financial matters without the ROD. To prevent undue hardship on the decedent's family, it is important to complete the document as soon as possible.*

b. *Sometimes local officials issue a preliminary death certificate certifying the fact of the death but stating that the cause of death is undetermined, pending the results of further investigations. If the consular officer is able to obtain a preliminary death certificate and anticipates a delay of more than six weeks in obtaining the final death certificate, issue a Preliminary Report of Death [see section 7 FAM 234 ].*

c. *If local authorities will not issue a preliminary death certificate and the consular officer anticipates a delay of more than six weeks in issuance of the ROD, advise the NOK of the reasons for the delay by direct relay telegram. The Department (CA/OCS) automatically receives an information copy of such telegrams.*

### **7 FAM 231.3 Responsibility for Obtaining Local Death Certificate**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. The consular officer is responsible for obtaining the death certificate and other necessary documents for preparing the ROD. Usually the consular officer obtains these directly from the local authorities, or from the local funeral home handling the funeral arrangements.

b. In some countries the local authorities are reluctant to issue documentation except to the NOK. In such cases the consular officer should work with the NOK to expedite the process. In no case should the consular officer require the family to obtain this documentation if it is possible for the consular officer to get it.

## **7 FAM 232 GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING FORM OF-180**

### **7 FAM 232.1 Accuracy of Content**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

To assist posts in preparing Form OF-180, these guidelines are provided. Because of the importance of the Report of Death (ROD), the information contained in the report must be accurate. The consular officer who signs the form is responsible for its accuracy even if it is prepared by another person, such as a Foreign Service National employee. Before signing the completed form, the consular officer should review it for accuracy. 7 FAM 232 Exhibit 232.1 provides a completed sample.

### **7 FAM 232.2 Place and Date of Issue**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

*The name of the consular office (American Embassy, American Consulate General, American Consulate, U.S. Liaison Office, U.S. Interests Section) must be shown on the form, along with the city, country, and date of issuance of the ROD. The ROD should be issued by the post that has consular jurisdiction over the place of death. When the death of a U.S. citizen occurs in an area that is not in the consular jurisdiction of a Foreign Service post, no ROD may be issued without the Department's prior advice and approval.*

## 7 FAM 232.3 Social Security Number

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

The Social Security number is not essential. Include it *on the form* if it is available at the post.

## 7 FAM 232.4 Full Name

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

Use the name contained in the U.S. documentation presented as proof of U.S. citizenship. If there is a discrepancy between the various documents, use the name shown on the passport, even if the passport is not the most recent document. Use the name shown on the most recent document, if no passport exists. Capitalize the surname. Include aliases and maiden names under "Remarks."

## 7 FAM 232.5 Evidence of U.S. Citizenship

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. Identify fully the documentation accepted as proof of citizenship. If it is a passport, cite its number, date of issuance, and place of issuance *on the "Evidence of U.S. Citizenship" line of the report*. For a naturalization certificate, give the serial number of the certificate. If both a passport and a naturalization certification are available, cite the passport *information on the "evidence" line and the naturalization information under "Remarks."*

b. If *citizenship* evidence is not available at the post, or if the local authorities, family, or friends have not responded quickly to the post's inquiries, *request confirmation of citizenship telegraphically from the Department (CA/OCS)*. In these cases, *show* the passport number, the date, and the place of issuance *under "Evidence of U.S. Citizenship,"* and *state* under "Remarks" that the information was obtained from the *Department of State*. Follow this procedure also when the passport of the deceased person or other evidence of citizenship has been lost or stolen.

c. If a person's citizenship status cannot be verified by the post or the Department, *amend* the title of the report to read "Report of the Death of a Person Alleged To Be an American Citizen."

## **7 FAM 232.6 Cause of Death**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. Cite the authority for *issuing an ROD*, such as the death certificate or a physician, as well as the cause of death. If the authority is a death certificate, cite the number of the certificate and name the department, agency, or office in which it is filed.

b. Do not state on the report that the medical or death certificate is attached. As an attachment is not part of any certified copies issued by the Department, a statement *about an attachment creates* confusion.

c. *Because the* report is an English-language document designed for use in the United States, *include* no foreign phrases under "Cause of Death." In this space insert the English translation of the cause of death indicated on the local death certificate or medical report.

d. Resist any urge to editorialize. If there is further information relating to the cause of death that should be known to the Department, *convey* it separately by telegram.

## **7 FAM 232.7 Disposition of Effects**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

The expression, "Not Applicable," is not appropriate for this item and will not be accepted *by the Department*. Each decedent at least has clothing, and the disposition of even minimal effects must be explained.

## **7 FAM 232.8 Remarks**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

In addition to information noted *in* sections 7 FAM 232.1 through 7 FAM 232.7 that might be included under "Remarks", this section is reserved for information pertaining to disposition of citizenship documents [see sections 7 FAM 244.2 and 7 FAM 1399.3 ]. *If additional space is required, continue the remarks* on the reverse side of the report and *initial them there, as well as signing the front of the form*.

## **7 FAM 232.9 Signing and Sealing**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

The consular *officer* must sign all copies of the Report of Death, including carbon and/or photo copies. The officer's typed name and title must appear under the signature. *Firmly* impress each copy made of the *ROD* with the consular impression seal so that all details of the seal are legible on the document. This requires cleaning the die *frequently* and obtaining a replacement when the seal's details are *no longer* fully discernible.

## **7 FAM 233 DISTRIBUTING FORM OF-180**

### **7 FAM 233.1 Distribution to the Department and Other U.S. Agencies**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. *Attach to the original Form OF-180 the original of the local death certificate, which is the basis for the report. Then send the original and one copy of Form OF-180 to the Department (CA/PPT/PS/RM) for filing.*

b. *If the deceased was receiving Federal benefits at the post, give a copy of the Report of Death for follow-up action to the consular officer responsible for Federal benefits at the post.*

c. *If the deceased was not receiving Federal benefits at the post, but the consular officer has reason to believe that person was receiving Federal benefits in the United States or elsewhere, send copies of the ROD directly to the Federal agencies involved.*

## **7 FAM 233.2 Distribution to Next of Kin and Legal Representative**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. *Send six copies of Form OF-180, Report of Death, to the legal representative of the deceased, generally the next of kin. At the time the original Form OF-180 is prepared, additional copies may be sent also to close relatives who have expressed, or have, an interest in the matter.*

b. *Copies issued to these persons at the time the original is prepared are free of charge [see 22 CFR 22.1, Item 9(c)].*

c. *Copies of the Report of Death mailed to relatives and to the legal representative should be accompanied by a brief letter of explanation and sympathy [see 7 FAM 233 Exhibit 233.2 ].*

## **7 FAM 233.3 Copy for State Vital Statistics Offices**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. *If the decedent was born in the United States send a copy of Form OF-180 to the state vital statistics office of the U.S. State of birth. Forward this copy under cover of a short memo indicating that it is being sent to allow that office to annotate its vital statistics records. If the decedent was born abroad no copy should be sent to vital statistics offices of the country of birth.*

b. *Addresses of the various state offices concerned are printed in the Department of Health and Human Services publication, Where to Write for Vital Records, which is revised periodically [see Appendix D].*

## **7 FAM 233.4 Copy for Post Files and Other Posts**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. *Place a copy of Form OF-180 in the post's consular files. [For disposition information, see Chapt 5 FAH-4 H-1500 Appendix A , Records Management Handbook, Item 150008b.]*

b. *If a part of the personal estate of the deceased is known to be in another consular district, send a copy of Form OF-180 to that Foreign Service post.*

## **7 FAM 233.5 Additional Copies of Form OF-180**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

*Posts often receive requests for copies of Form OF-180 long after the original was issued. Upon request by a person having a valid interest, the Department (Passport Services Correspondence Branch, CA/PPT/PS/PC, Room 386, 1425 K St, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20524) will provide certified copies of the document (Form OF-180). The fee for each copy of the document is prescribed in 22 CFR 22.1, item 45 (c).*

## **7 FAM 234 PRELIMINARY AND AMENDED REPORT OF DEATH**

### **7 FAM 234.1 Preliminary Report of Death**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

*a. When a delay of more than six weeks is anticipated in obtaining all the information necessary for completion of Form OF-180 [see Section 7 FAM 0231.2 ], the consular officer should prepare and distribute a Preliminary Report of Death. A preliminary report must be prepared on Form OF-180 but with the title clearly amended to read "Preliminary Report of Death of an American Citizen Abroad."*

*b. A preliminary report may not be based on less than official notification in writing that death has occurred. Circumstantial evidence, such as the return of Social Security Administration checks or a letter from a relative, is not sufficient to warrant the preparation of a preliminary report.*

*c. If the consular officer anticipates a delay of more than six weeks in obtaining the documentation necessary for issuing a Report of Death and is unable to obtain an official notification in writing that death has occurred, the officer should send a direct relay telegram to the NOK, explaining the reason for the delay.*

### **7 FAM 234.2 Amended Report of Death**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

*a. When an amendment of Form OF-180 is required, type the word "amended" at the top of the form. The date on which the amended report is prepared is the date to be shown in the space under the document title, calling for "Post & date of issue."*

*b. Send the original of the amended report to the Department (CA/OCS). Send a copy to each person listed on the first report, along with an explanatory letter, requesting that the first copy or copies be returned to post for destruction.*

*c. The Department will destroy its own copy of the first Form OF-180 upon receipt of the amended copy.*

## **7 FAM 235 PRESUMPTIVE DEATH**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. In many situations, such as earthquakes, air crashes, or floods, the deaths of U.S. citizens will be presumed by the local authorities without actually being proven. In these cases, if the local authorities or a competent court determine that a specific U.S. citizen is “reported missing and presumed dead” and if they provide a written statement to that effect, the post should prepare a Report of Death with the title amended to read, “Report of the Presumptive Death of an American Citizen.”

b. This type of report must be based upon a finding by competent local authority. Statements from supposed witnesses or friends are not sufficient grounds upon which to issue a Report of Presumptive Death.

c. In any case where a court ruling or statement by local authorities is not obtainable, the consular officer should submit to the Department for an advisory opinion as much relevant information as possible, including all available information about the circumstances of the presumed death, personal data (such as date of birth, name, physical description, citizenship information), sworn statements taken from witnesses and companions, newspaper clippings, and other relevant data.

d. In preparing a Report of Presumptive Death, the consular officer must insert a statement, under the heading “Cause of Death,” such as “reported missing, believed to be dead,” giving the source of the information on which the presumption is based.

e. Also *include* a statement in the “Remarks” section, specifying the requirements of local law for the establishment of a legal presumption of death for missing persons. For example, determine whether a person is presumed to be considered legally dead automatically after *a prescribed period*, or whether formal court action is necessary to give the presumption validity.

f. If a presumed death is subsequently established legally, *submit* a final and complete report to the Department on Form OF-180. The title should read, “Final Report of the Death of an American Citizen” and the “Remarks” section must *refer* to the Presumptive Report.

## **7 FAM 236 DEATH AT SEA**

### **7 FAM 236.1 Maritime Practice and Record of Death**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. The Master's Log

(1) Death on the high seas *is handled in accordance with the laws of the nation of the ship's registry.*

(2) U.S. law (46 U.S.C. 11301 (b)(6) ) requires masters of all U.S. vessels traveling to and from ports in the United States to maintain an official log book sometimes call the “Master's Log” or the “Official Log” and to make, or cause to be made, a log entry of each death that occurs on board that vessel, to include cause of death. Other maritime nations have similar laws. At each port of call where there is an American consular officer, the masters of U.S. vessels should report all deaths of U.S. citizens having occurred en route *that were not* reported to a consulate at an earlier port of call (see 22 CFR 85.4). Masters of foreign vessels *may also follow this practice, and the consular officer should provide appropriate assistance.*

(3) The master of a *U.S. vessel* furnishes evidence of the death in the form of a certified copy of the log entry in the official log recording the death of the U.S. citizen. *The complete Master's Log of every flag vessel returning to the U.S. from a foreign voyage is retained by the U.S. Coast Guard upon the vessel's return.* Masters of foreign vessels usually also furnish certified copies of their log entries when the foreign master delivers the personal property of the deceased U.S. citizen to the consular officer or when the family of the deceased has asked the consul to arrange for disposition of the remains.



*b. Preparing Form OF-180*

(1) When knowledge of the death of an American seaman or of any U.S. citizen serving on a foreign vessel reaches a consular officer, the officer must report the death promptly to the Department. If the consular officer has been officially notified of the death or has verified such death through official sources *a Form OF-180 should be completed*. The preparation must *comply with instructions in section 7 FAM 232*.

(2) Information needed for Form OF-180 preparation can be obtained from various sources, including:

*(a) Entries from the Master's Log*

The Master's Log entry concerning the death should contain sufficient information concerning the death, the cause of death, and the identity of the deceased to permit completion of *Form OF-180*. *The consular officer retains copies of the log entry, bearing the certification of the master if possible, with the post's copy of the Report and attaches it to the original Form OF-180 to be sent to the Department (CA/PPT/PS/RM).*

*(b) Records of Port Authorities*

Local vital statistics registrars or other competent shore authorities have established procedures for recording deaths that occur in the territorial waters of that country or that occur on the high seas on a vessel whose next port of call is in that country. A consular officer can obtain evidence of the death, cause of the death, and of the identity of the deceased from those officials.

*(c) Records of the Ship's Registry*

If neither the Master's Log nor port records provide enough information to prepare *Form OF-180*, a consular officer in the country of the ship's registry can obtain from central government records an extract of the voyage log as deposited in the official repository for ship's records or a copy of an entry made by a central registrar of vital statistics. In this case, *Form OF-180* is prepared by the consular post whose district includes the city where such central records are maintained instead of the post having *consular* jurisdiction over the port of call of the vessel on which the death occurred.

## **7 FAM 236.2 Deaths of U.S. Seamen**

*(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)*

*See 22 CFR Part 85 concerning deceased seamen and their effects, and 22 CFR 85.3 for reports of death of U.S. seamen.*

## **7 FAM 237 DEATH ON AN AIRCRAFT**

### **7 FAM 237.1 Certification of a Death**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

*A death occurring on a flying aircraft usually cannot be certified until the aircraft lands and competent medical personnel can certify the death. In such cases, death is deemed to have occurred in the territory of the country where the aircraft has landed, and the appropriate authorities of that country will issue a death certificate.*

### **7 FAM 237.2 Aircraft Proceeding to Foreign Airports**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

*A consular officer must issue a Report of Death, Form OF-180, when an aircraft bearing the remains of a U.S. citizen who died during the flight lands at an airport within the consular district.*

### **7 FAM 237.3 Aircraft Proceeding to U.S. Airports**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

*Consular officers are not responsible for preparing a Report of Death when a U.S. citizen dies during a flight from an airport in their consular district to an airport in the United States. The Report of Death, in such case, is issued by the civil authorities in the U.S. State in which the airport is located.*

## **7 FAM 238 DEATHS AND UNVERIFIED CITIZENSHIP**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

a. Since a completed Report of Death is acceptable as evidence of a person's citizenship *at the time of death*, the consular officer may accept as verification of that person's citizenship only those documents which are considered acceptable for passport issuance [see 7 FAM 1300 ]. Consular officers must exercise due care in confirming the citizenship of the deceased.

b. *Do not prepare a Form OF-180 when neither the consular officer nor the Department can determine the citizenship of the deceased, after making all reasonable local efforts. In such cases, send to the Department (CA/OCS) a record of the efforts made and the evidence uncovered or found, and mark the post's file for destruction 3 years after the last communication or action on the case. Any previously issued copies should be recovered by the post for destruction.*

## **7 FAM 239 DISPOSITION OF DOCUMENTS OF CITIZENSHIP**

### **7 FAM 239.1 Passport**

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

*Cancel the passport of a deceased U.S. citizen, consistent with 7 FAM 1399.3 , by punching holes in it. Cancellation procedures are set form in 7 FAM 1399.4 notwithstanding any instructions herein. Return or provide the canceled passport to the next of kin either with the Report of Death, Form OF-180, or with the decedent's personal effects. Return the canceled passport to the Department (CA/OCS) only when the next of kin or legal representative has not been identified. Note the fact of the cancellation and the disposition of the document in the "Remarks" section of Form OF-180.*

## **7 FAM 239.2 Certificate of Naturalization or Citizenship**

*(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)*

*The consular officer cancels the certificate of naturalization or citizenship of a deceased U.S. citizen by an endorsement, showing the date and place of death of the person to whom it was issued. Return or forward the naturalization or citizenship document to the next of kin, either with the Report of Death, Form OF-180, or with the decedent's personal effects. When no NOK or legal representative is located, return the document to the Department (CA/OCS) under cover of a memorandum. Note the cancellation of the certificate and its disposition in the "Remarks" section of Form OF-180.*

## **7 FAM 239.3 Other Documents**

*(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)*

- a. Return other documents, such as birth certificates, to the next of kin or legal representative.*
- b. Cancel a Card of Identity and Registration and handle it in the same manner as a U.S. passport [see section 7 FAM 239.1 ].*

# 7 FAM 232 Exhibit 232.1

## SAMPLE OF A REPORT OF DEATH - OPTIONAL FORM 180

### EXHIBIT 232.1

### SAMPLE OF A REPORT OF DEATH – OPTIONAL FORM 180

OPTIONAL FORM 180  
(Rev. 12-81)  
(FORMERLY FS-192)  
DEPT. OF STATE  
50180-103

#### REPORT OF THE DEATH OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN ABROAD

American Embassy, Paris, France April 4, 1993  
(Post & date of issue)  
SSA No. 000-00-0000

Name in full Ray Harris Kent Age 71

Date and Place of Birth January 15, 1922, France

Evidence of U.S. Citizenship Passport Number G-000000 issued January 15, 1992, in Miami

Address in U.S.A. 1424 Meadowlane Drive, Miami, Florida 20315

Permanent or Temporary Address Abroad Hotel Ritz, Avenue Victor Hugo, Paris, France

Date of death March 27 1:30 PM 1993  
(Month) (Day) (Hour) (Minute) (Year)

Place of death American Hospital Paris France  
(Number and street) or (Hospital or hotel) (City) (Country)

Cause of death Internal hemorrhaging, according to Dr. George Lyon, coroner for the city  
(Including authority for statement – if physician, include full name and official title, if any)  
of Paris

Disposition of the remains Interred at Cimetiere Nouveau de Neuilly-sur-Seine, France

Local law governing disinterment of remains provides that may be disinterred at any time upon  
request of nearest relative or legal representative of estate

Disposition of the effects In possession of (spouse, consular officer, police, court) at (name of city)

Person of official responsible for custody of effects and accounting therefor Mrs. Ray Harris Kent

Traveling/residing abroad with relatives or friends as follows:  
NAME ADDRESS DATE SENT

Informed by telegram or telephone  
NAME ADDRESS DATE SENT  
Mrs. Ray Harris Kent 1424 Meadowlane Drive March 27, 1993  
Miami, Florida

Copy of this report sent to:  
NAME ADDRESS DATE SENT  
Mrs. Ray Harris Kent 1424 Meadowlane Drive April 4, 1993  
Miami, Florida

Notification or copy sent to Federal Agencies: SSA ☒ VA ☒ CSC ☐ Other (State Agency)

The original copy of this document and information concerning the effects are being placed in the permanent files of the Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520.

Remarks: Passport cancelled and returned to Mrs. Ray Harris Kent Naturalization Certificate  
No. 0000000 annotated and returned to Mrs. Ray Harris Kent

(Continue on reverse if necessary.)

[SEAL]

(Signature on all copies)

of the United States of America.

## 7 FAM 233 Exhibit 233.2

(TL:CON-58; 10-12-93)

### **SAMPLE OF SYMPATHY LETTER TO NOK, TRANSMITTING FORM OF -180, REPORT OF DEATH**



United States Department of State

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

June 10, 1993

Mrs. John Doe  
1235 Main Street  
Any Town, Any State 12345

Dear Mrs. Doe:

Enclosed please find six copies of the Foreign Service Report of Death Form OF-180, in the name of John Doe. This is an official document, acceptable in any U.S. jurisdiction for the settlement of legal, financial, and estate matters.

Should you have need for additional copies, they may be obtained from: Passport Services Correspondence Branch, Room 386, 1425 K Street N.W., Washington D.C. 20524. The current cost of the document is \$10 per copy.

Please accept my deepest sympathy in your bereavement. Should you desire further information, or if I can be of assistance in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely Yours,

(Signature)

(Typed name and title)

Enclosures:  
Report of Death (6 copies)

